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THE DRESDEN ESPERANTO CONGRESS.

BY HENRY JAMES FORMAN.

THE success of any world-congress depends upon three things: the importance of its object, the enthusiasm and interest of the members in their cause and the general influence it diffuses for the good of humanity. Assuming that these premises are true, the Dresden Esperanto Congress held from the 16th to the 22nd of August last was one of the most successful of world-congresses. The German Empire, which despite all its progress is of an exaggerated conservatism, paid close attention to the doings of the Congress, looked upon the spectacle of thirty nationalities united by a common speech with profound interest and, so far as one could judge from conversation and the press, applauded its fundamental idea.

The fundamental idea of Esperanto, it may be briefly restated here, is the same fundamental idea upon which all progress rests. It is the increase of facility in human intercourse. Just as the invention of the printing-press made it possible for all the world to be educated, or the discovery of the telegraph to know what is happening in every section of the globe the same day, so Esperanto has for its object the promotion of a simple, flexible auxiliary language by means of which every human being will be able to understand its fellow. So simple is this tongue that any one can learn it in a space incredibly shorter than is required for any natural tongue now in existence, and when every one does learn it the barriers of speech that make the many nations so alien to each other will have fallen away. It has, moreover, the advantage of neutrality, so that the jealousy of one nation over the prosperity of another's language abroad is absolutely eliminated. We may then, I believe, concede that such an object is of sufficient moment to animate a world-congress.

And the Dresden Congress, it may be added for the benefit of some readers, was the fourth in the series of universal Esperanto congresses, the three preceding ones having been held at Boulogne, at Geneva and at Cambridge, England, respectively. So that the animating spirit is no new thing, but general propaganda aside, has already been brought to the close observation of various European nations.

Last year, in describing the Cambridge Congress, we had occasion to speak of the satisfying spectacle of thirty nationalities assembled in one church attending a divine service in a common tongue and giving ear to a sermon in a language understood by all. At the risk of repetition, it must be said that to those who were last August in Dresden that seemed just as wonderful a phenomenon as it did the very first time they had seen it. Secular movements for universal unity and harmony among mankind, however well founded, are still recent when compared with the ancient striving of the Church. For centuries upon centuries the Christian Church has preached universal brotherhood as among the most precious and fundamental of its doctrines. And how near soever may be the approach to "good-will to man," the barrier of alien speech still separates the nations. To those who attended either the Catholic service at Dresden, or the Evangelical, both conducted in Esperanto, and saw the hundreds of worshippers from every clime assembled under one roof and under one pastor, saying their simple prayers and singing their hymns in one language, could not but feel that the curse of Babel was at an end.

This feeling was intensified by the meetings of the Bible translators. Some years ago the present writer came upon a collection of Bibles in many tongues and dialects, and, though their number was very large, they by no means represented all the translations extant. One could not but reflect upon the time and energy that could have been spared, and upon the simplicity and benefits to mankind of some common medium of speech that would do away with these numerous tomes, that all could understand. The simplicity and the benefits of such a speech have not only appeared, but have even done their work. The greater part of the New Testament and much of the Old Testament lay upon the table already translated, and the balance will soon be completed. The book of Proverbs, translated by Dr. Zamenhof himself, is

even now appearing in this REVIEW. The endeavor in a task like this, most people will surely agree, is not only useful, but noble and beautiful. In short, take it all in all, the object of Esperanto seems to grow in importance with every concrete instance of the uses to which the language is put.

The opening of the Fourth Congress on Monday the 17th of August was one of the most impressive pictures that I have ever witnessed. About three thousand people filled the Vereinshaus, which was decorated with the flags and shields of all nations. Upon the platform, as is customary, sat the *eminentuloj* identified with the cause of Esperanto. Dr. Zamenhof was there, and M. Boirac, the earnest Rector of the University of Dijon. General Sébert, also of France, sat close to Dr. Mybs of Altona, Germany, the chief organizer of the Fourth Congress. H. Bolingbroke Mudie, the energetic and wealthy young Englishman who has dedicated all his time and energies to Esperanto, still seemed to exert an influence over this Congress, as he did last year over the Cambridge Congress, of which he was largely the organizer. Felix Moscheles, the artist and peace enthusiast, whose motto in dealing with millionaires is, "Give me money and I'll give you peace," sat beside Colonel John Pollen, C.I.E., England's official friend of all the Rajahs and Newabs of the Indian Empire. As Colonel Pollen has been obliged to learn most tongues of Europe and Asia, he knows the value of such a medium as Esperanto and has ever been zealous in its cause. With considerable pride those of us who came from the United States looked upon still another delegate, Major Paul Straub, officially chosen by our War Department to attend the Congress and to report upon the uses and merits of Esperanto.

The gold and silver galloon of the German army and of official Saxony glittered among the multitude, for His Majesty the King of Saxony graciously bestowed his protection upon the Congress, and every Minister of State in Saxony was an honorary member of the Congress. There were official delegates on behalf of Saxony, the city of Dresden and the Kingdom of Sweden.

Colonel John Pollen as President of last year's Congress formally ceded the chair to Dr. Mybs of Altona, and then, as is customary, Dr. Zamenhof arose and gave his annual message to the Congress. Dr. Zamenhof's message this year, as every year, was one of progress, but in addition he announced the formation of

an Academy, after the pattern of the French Academy which should pass upon matters of linguistic growth and, where necessary, reform. The ovation which Dr. Zamenhof receives every time that he appears before an Esperanto gathering has often been described, and yet there is to the observer always something novel in it. There is always a peculiar sense of exultation in beholding a man who has created a living language in which thousands upon thousands already exchange ideas the world over.

The burgomaster of Dresden extended to the Congress the greetings and welcome of his city, which had already substantiated this ceremony by considerable financial aid. The many delegates from all over the globe then brought their messages to the Congress. From India, from Iceland, from Siberia and from Peru, as well as from every country in Europe, came the intelligence that Esperanto was flourishing and prospering there. But the most enthusiastic reception, perhaps, was accorded to the Japanese delegates, and to Major Straub representing the Government of the United States. The Europeans in some way have grown accustomed to imagine that Japan and America were recently all but at war with each other. And to see delegates from each of the quasi-belligerents thus juxtaposed on a platform that makes for nothing if not for peace, confirmed their notions of the ultimate ideal of Esperanto.

The balance of that week was filled up with the general activities of a congress. At the daily business meetings the thousand and one problems of propaganda, of organization and of general improvement of conditions that would naturally confront such a movement, were discussed freely and forcibly in the language with which they were concerned. The afternoons were given up to special meetings, sight-seeing and excursions in and out of the city. The municipality of Dresden courteously presented free transportation to every member of the Congress upon all the street railways, which constantly gave one the feeling of actually being the city's guest. There were delightful excursions to the beautiful region known as the Saxon Switzerland and to Meissen, the home of Albrecht's castle and of the famous porcelain works. Meissen showed its pleasure in receiving the Congress by a public demonstration and a reception by the Mayor and Corporation. The Congressists came up the river from Dresden in three large boats, and the Mayor was at the landing with an orchestra to wel-

come Dr. and Mrs. Zamenhof as well as the other Esperantists. From a balcony of the Rathaus the Mayor made a graceful speech to the guests and welcomed them to the ancient city of Meissen. The maidens of Meissen then served a glass of wine to every member of the Congress to drink the city's health withal. The return home by moonlight was like a triumphal procession, what with the cheering and the fireworks all the way upon the banks.

An Esperanto Congress is a cosmos in little. Aside from the general meetings there are meetings of the various nationalities, special meetings of the scientists, the lawyers, teachers, physicians and various others. Even the Esperantists among the Dresden police had their meeting. One of the most interesting of these sectional meetings was that of the Red Cross.

The Red Cross societies the world over have found that Esperanto is perhaps the best "supply" they could take into the field in time of war. The benefits of a ready understanding among the Red Cross workers of different nationalities in the field are too obvious to need dwelling upon. Lieutenant Bayol, an instructor at the French military school of St.-Cyr, has been organizing this particular department for some time, and has already published a handbook of Esperanto for the special use of the Red Cross. Major Straub, it is believed, will report favorably to the War Department and urge the adoption of Esperanto for the use of the Red Cross, the medical corps of the army, as well as generally.

The week of the Congress drew speedily to a close, and on Saturday, the 22nd of August, was held the last session of the Congress. On that day the present writer had the honor of inviting the Congress, on behalf of the editor of this REVIEW and the Esperanto Association of North America, to come to America. The invitation was accepted. We cannot but hope that every one at all interested in Esperanto will do all in his power to make the Fifth Congress a success.

HENRY JAMES FORMAN.